

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 /029 W

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R 030421Z JUN 77

FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3322

INFO AMCONSUL ACUKLAND

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 2116

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, NZ

SUBJECT: SHOP ASSISTANTS STRIKE CLOSES WELLINGTON AND CHRIST-  
CHURCH RETAIL OUTLETS

1. SUMMARY: STRIKE VOTES IN LARGEST METROPOLITAN CENTERS JUNE  
2 LED TO 48 HOUR STRIKE OF SHOP ASSISTANTS JUNE 2-3. 85-90 PERCENT  
OF RETAIL OUTLETS IN WELLINGTON CHRISTCHURCH CLOSED FROM  
JUNE 2-7; AUCKLAND SHOP ASSISTANTS VOTED NOT TO STRIKE. STRIKES  
ARE IN RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED SHOP TRADING HOURS BILL  
END SUMMARY.

2. FOR FIRST TIME HISTORY OF NEW ZEALAND  
SHOP EMPLOYEES UNION, MEMBERS IN TWO OF COUNTRY'S LARGEST  
METROPOLITAN AREAS VOTED JUNE 2 TO STRIKE. OVERRIDING A  
UNION LEADERSHIP RECOMMENDATION FOR 24 HOUR WORK STOPPAGE IN  
OPPOSITION TO GOVERNMENT'S SHOP TRADING HOURS BILL, WELLINGTON  
AND CHRISTCHURCH SHOP ASSISTANTS VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY FOR  
48 HOUR STRIKE. EFFECT OF STRIKE, COMBINED WITH NORMAL WEEKEND  
CLOSINGS AND MONDAY QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HOLIDAY, WILL BE TO CLOSE  
85-90 PERCENT OF WELLINGTON AND CHRISTCHURCH RETAIL OUTLETS  
FROM JUNE 2-7. SHOP ASSISTANTS IN AUCKLAND -- TWICE  
AGAIN NEW ZEALAND'S LARGEST MERCHANDISING CENTER -- VOTED NOT  
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TO STRIKE AT PRESENT TIME.

3. FOCUS OF STRIKE ACTION BY NORMALLY NON-MILITANT, SPLINTERED  
SHOP EMPLOYEES IS SHOP TRADING HOURS BILL INTRODUCED THIS PAST  
WEEK IN PARLIAMENT. LEGISLATION, WHEN ORIGINALLY PROPOSED LAST  
YEAR BY GOVERNMENT, WOULD HAVE ALLOWED EXTENSION OF SHOP TRADING  
HOURS INTO WEEKEND IN RESPONSE TO OPINION POLLS WHICH

SHOWED SATURDAY TRADING FAVORED BY 70 PERCENT OF POPULACE.  
SUBSEQUENT HEARINGS AND SUBMISSIONS, HOWEVER, RESULTED IN  
CONSIDERABLY WATERED-DOWN  
BILL WHICH WOULD PERMIT 7AM-9PM SHOPPING MONDAY  
THROUGH FRIDAY ONLY AND ADD FEW ADDITIONAL ITEMS TO PERMITTED  
LIST FOR WEEKEND TRADING.

4. SURPRISINGLY SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT BY SHOP  
EMPLOYEES LEADERSHIP AND WELLINGTON AND CHRISTCHURCH TRADES  
COUNCILS UNIFIED THEIR MEMBERSHIP INTO MILITANT OPPOSITION, AND  
CHARACTERIZED THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION AS A GOVERNMENT-DIRECTED  
FRONTAL ASSAULT ON HERETOFORE SACROSANCT "FAMILY  
WEEKEND." OPPOSITION LABOR PARTY HAS LENT STRONG SUPPORT  
TO UNIONS AND MANY RETAILERS THEMSELVES HAVE AGREED WITH  
UNIONS THAT BILL WOULD PUSH UP PRICES AND DESTROY WEEKEND  
LEISURE.

5. COMMENT: IF ANYTHING IN NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY COULD BE CALLED  
"UN-NEW ZEALANDER" IT WOULD BE A SUGGESTION TO MODIFY THE  
40-HOUR WEEK AND THUS DO HARM TO THE "QUALITY OF LIFE" WHICH  
STEMS FROM THE ABILITY OF MOST KIWIS TO ENJOY TWO-DAY WEEKENDS.  
TRADITION DEFINES WEEKEND LEISURE AS SPORTS EVENTS AND BEER  
DRINKING; THAT SOME MIGHT CONSIDER SATURDAY MORNING SHOPPING  
OR OVERTIME WAGES ALSO ATTRACTIVE IS NOT TO BE TOLERATED. IT  
SEEMS UNLIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT EVEN A TWENTY-THREE SEAT MAJORITY  
IS SUFFICIENT FOR THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO GAMBLE WITH A  
"QUALITY OF LIFE" ISSUE. IN THE MEANTIME, THE WEEKEND LAMENT  
OF A WAR-TIME AMERICAN MARINE, REAPPEARING RECENTLY IN THE  
LOCAL PRESS, SEEMS DESTINED TO REMAIN APPROPRIATE: "WELLINGTON  
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IS HALF AS BIG AS THE NEW YORK CITY CEMETARY AND TWICE AS DEAD."  
KILLG  
ORE

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## Message Attributes

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